

Montgomery County Web Portal

Steve Emanuel, Director
Department of Technology Services
Patrick Lacefield, Director
Public Information Office

CountyStat Principles

- **Require Data Driven Performance**
- **Promote Strategic Governance**
- **Increase Government Transparency**
- **Foster a Culture of Accountability**



Agenda

- **Welcome and introductions**
- **Meeting goals and purpose**
- **Benchmarking the County web portal**
 - Against other jurisdictions
 - Against itself over time
- **Major department-identified areas for improvement**
 - Governance structure
 - Training and resource utilization
 - Screen real estate
 - Overall look and feel of County web portal
- **Determining a department's need for an external website**
- **Measuring success**
- **Wrap-Up and Follow-up Items**



CountyStat Meeting Goal

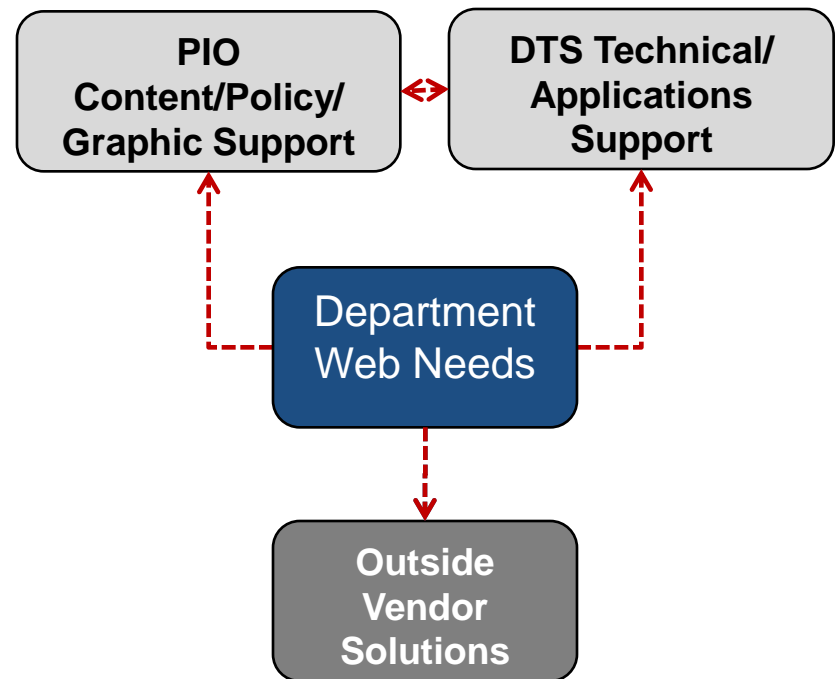
- **The goal of this meeting is:**
 - To gain strategic direction on how web portal development should proceed over coming years
 - To build a streamlined process for departments to gain the necessary support for the development of quality websites that deliver the information and services to county residents



Streamlining County Web Portal Management

- Responsibility for the County web portal is shared between the Public Information Office (PIO) and Department of Technology Services (DTS)
- Currently, there is not an identified County webmaster to act as a central point of contact for internal and external customers

Current Web Portal Management Flow Chart



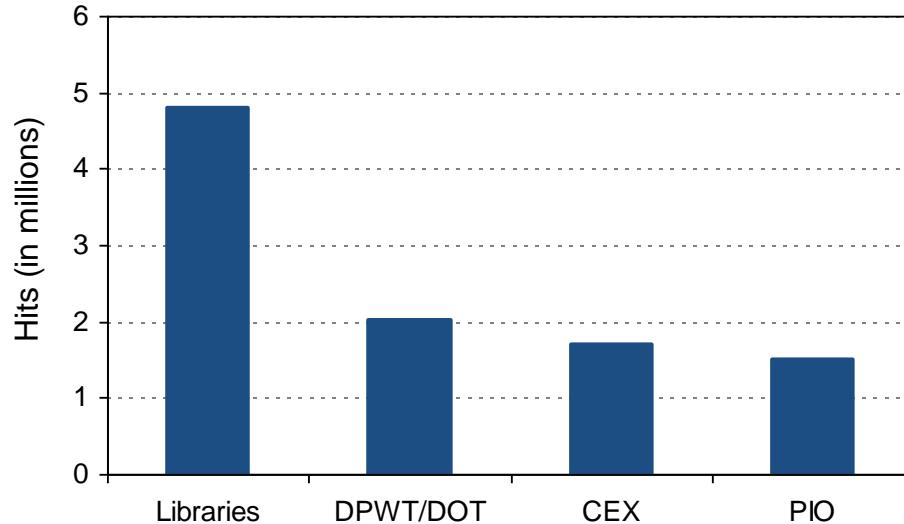
Providing clarity to the current web portal management scheme would likely impact the overall user experience and future web portal development.



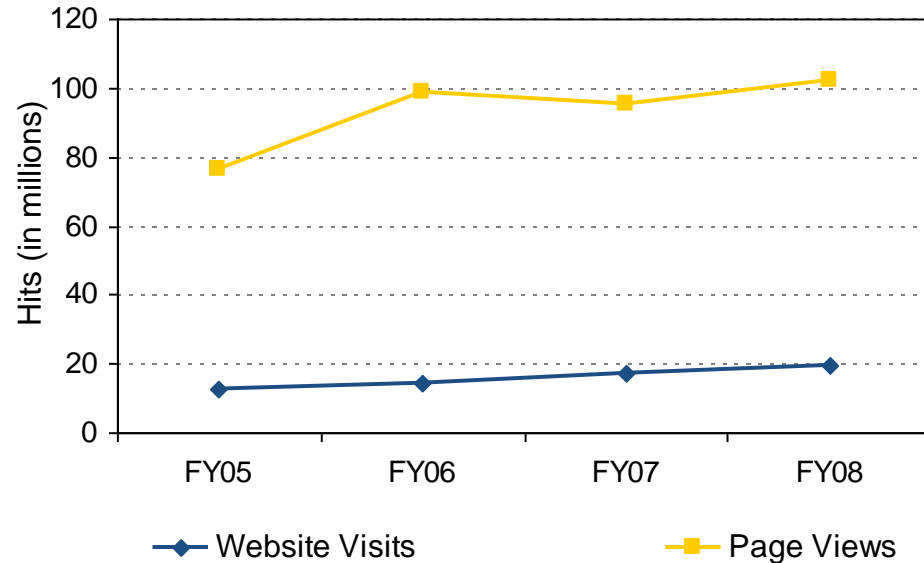
Importance of County Web Portal

Utilization Trends

County Departments with Highest Volume of Web Traffic in CY09



County Website Use, FY05-FY08



Because of increased utilization and expected impact of upcoming County initiatives (i.e. MC311, ERP), it is important to set a clear direction for future web portal development.



Source: DTS; Web Trends data

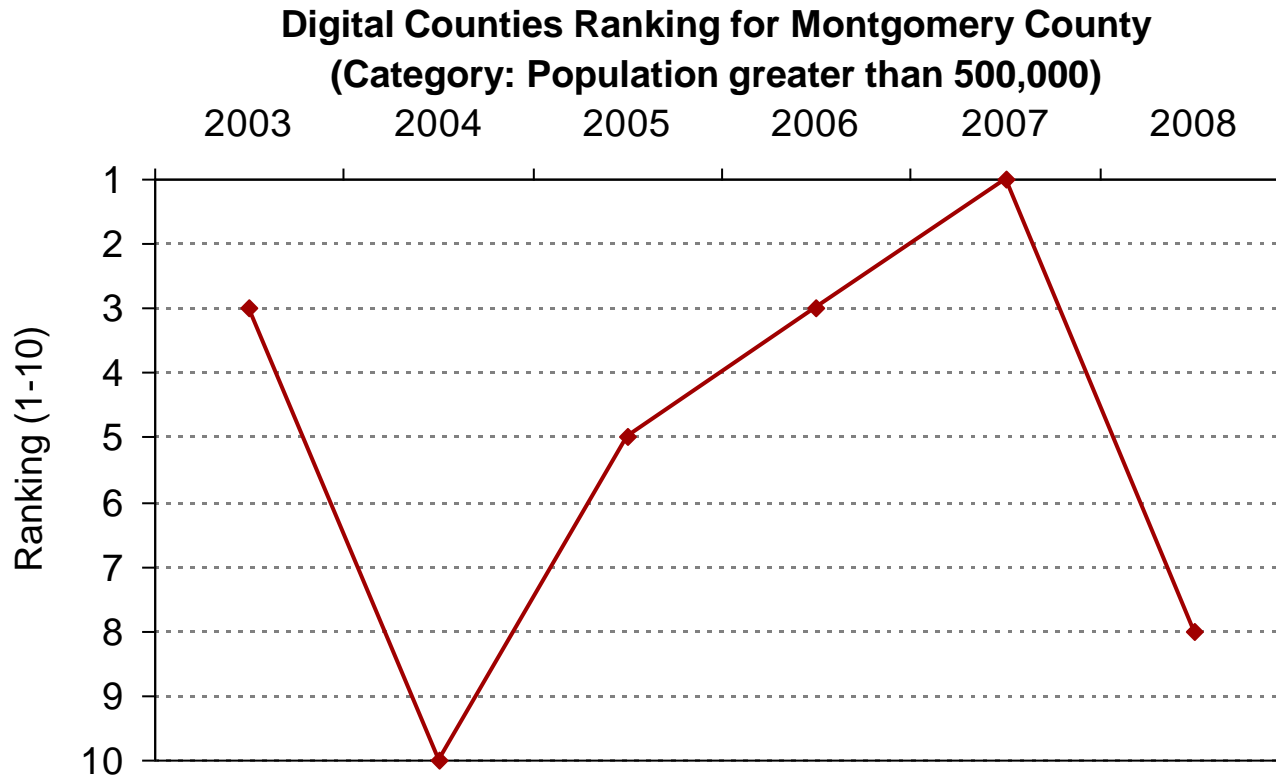
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Benchmarking County Web Portal

Digital Counties Survey



Each year, the Center for Digital Government and NACO conduct a survey of county IT programs, including a large component assessing the counties' web presence and online capabilities. Montgomery County has moved up and down through the top ten rankings.



Source: Center for Digital Government, Digital Counties Survey

Benchmarking County Web Portal

Digital Counties Survey: Comparison to Other Jurisdictions

Digital Counties Ranking (Category: Population greater than 500,000)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
1st	Maricopa Co	San Diego Co	Fairfax Co	Orange Co, FL	Montgomery Co	San Diego Co
2nd	Miami-Dade Co	Orange Co, FL	Fulton Co San Diego Co	Fairfax Co King Co	Orange Co, FL Anne Arundel Co	Anne Arundel Co Oakland Co
3rd	Montgomery Co Orange Co, FL	Alameda Co	Orange Co, FL	Montgomery Co Tulsa Co	Fulton Co	Fairfax Co
4th	Orange Co, CA San Diego Co	Bernalillo Co Tulsa Co	King Co	Oakland Co	Fairfax Co	Westchester Co
5th	Riverside Co	Snohomish Co	Montgomery Co	San Diego Co	Snohomish Co	King Co Orange Co, FL
6th	Los Angeles Co	Sacramento Co	Oakland Co	Fulton Co	Oakland Co	Sacramento Co
7th	Bernalillo Co Kent Co	Hennepin Co	Westchester Co	Sacramento Co Westchester Co	Sacramento Co	Tulsa Co
8th	Fairfax Co	Wake Co	Anne Arundel Co	Anne Arundel Co	Westchester Co	Montgomery Co Wake Co
9th	Contra Costa Co Fulton Co	Fulton Co	Alameda Co Tulsa Co	Snohomish Co	San Diego Co	Prince George's Co
10th	Mecklenburg Co	Montgomery Co	Miami-Dade Co	Miami-Dade Co	Westchester Co	Orange Co, CA



Source: Center for Digital Government, Digital Counties Survey

Benchmarking County Web Portal

Web Traffic Metrics

Web Traffic Metrics (Alexa Internet)

Jurisdiction	Traffic Rank	Average Time on Site (In Minutes)
Montgomery Co, MD	45,146	2.7
Fairfax Co, VA	25,895	4.6
Arlington Co, VA	131,141	2.5
Loudoun Co, VA	121,949	2.9
Prince William Co, VA	159,362	3.8
Baltimore Co, MD	173,707	2.9
District of Columbia	17,717	3.2

Metric	Definition
Traffic Rank	Measure of a website's popularity; calculated using a combination of an average of daily visitors and pageviews over the last three months
Average Time on Site	Measure of user attention; average number of minutes a user is on the site averaged over the last three months

Alexa Internet collects web traffic data based on usage patterns from a variety of sources over a rolling 3 month period. This data is used by Alexa to develop a series of metrics used to evaluate websites.

Source: Alexa Internet, Inc.



Benchmarking County Web Portal

Web Traffic Metrics

Jurisdiction	Traffic Rank	Average Time on Site (In Minutes)
Montgomery Co, MD	45,146	2.7
Fairfax Co, VA	25,895	4.6
King Co, WA	26,297	3.5
Wake Co, NC	40,756	4.3
Orange Co, FL	79,333	3.3
Sacramento Co, CA	123,628	4.1
Westchester Co, NY	126,443	3.5
Oakland Co, MI	162,321	3.9
Anne Arundel Co, MD	204,817	3.2
Tulsa Co, OK	241,493	6.5
Prince George's Co, MD	284,892	3.7

The above jurisdictions are the counties which were ranked in the top 10 of the Digital Counties Survey, in order to offer another method of comparing Montgomery County's web presence and online capabilities.



Source: Alexa Internet, Inc.

County Web Portal

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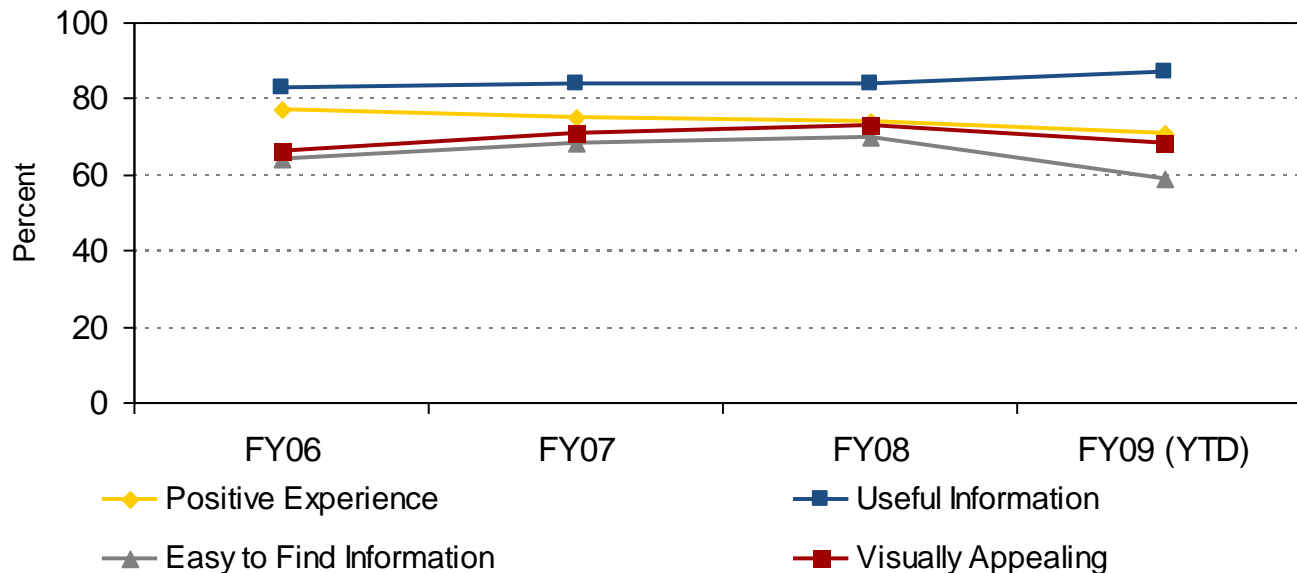
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Benchmarking County Web Portal

County Web Portal Survey

Montgomery County Web Site Survey



- DTS maintains an online web visitor survey, accessible through the main page of the County web portal. Any visitor to the website can answer the survey

From FY08 to FY09 (year-to-date), the percent of surveyed users who agree that the County web portal has easy to find information, is a positive experience, and is visually appealing, has decreased, while those that agree that the information is useful has increased.



Source: DTS

Benchmarking County Web Portal

Analysis of Web Portal “Freshness”

“Freshness” refers to how often website content is updated and is important to keep web visitors coming back to a site

▪ **The County Content Management System is used by County web content contributors to keep web documents fresh on a daily basis**

- The CMS enables Content Approvers or Supervisors to generate “Freshness” reports to identify those pages or documents that have not been updated

▪ **Generally, departments do a good job on maintaining their content and links**

- The County receives very few complaints from web visitors with regard to broken links
- Department reorganizations and web template redesigns typically cause the majority of the broken links
- DTS does provide broken link analysis for existing sites on a request basis and from time to time on a more proactive basis as resources are available

Since County web content is managed in a decentralized manner, content management, including broken link analysis, has been primarily the responsibility of the content owner/department.



Benchmarking County Web Portal

Analysis of Web Portal “Freshness”

- **CountyStat conducted a reviewed County Government departments’ homepages, accessible through the “Departments and Agencies” page on the web portal**
- **Each link on the department’s homepage was clicked and made sure to be active**
- **Broken (inactive) links were noted and summarized below**
- **Of the 32 departments reviewed:**
 - 29 departments had no broken links
 - DOT has 5 broken links
 - FRS has 2 broken links
 - HHS, Police, and the Commission for Women have 1 broken link

Managing and repairing broken links is one component of maintaining a fresh and consistently updated web portal.



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Summarization of Major Department-Identified Areas for Improvement

1. Web portal governance

- Departments seek more formal articulation of the guidelines for website creation and guidance on the availability of website tools

2. Training, information and resource sharing

- Departments seek the opportunity to engage with other web stakeholders to increase their capacity

3. Screen real estate

- Departments seek access to a larger portion of the County website real estate

4. Look, feel, and usability

- Departments understand the need for County branding, yet they want to ensure that most pertinent information is easily located via the County homepage

To identify the major areas of needed improvement from the standpoint of internal County users, interviews were conducted with HHS, Finance, DEP-Solid Waste, Libraries, and the ERP office. There were 4 major themes to their comments.



Addressing the Need For Clear and Specific Web Portal Governance

Issue: Departments seek more formal articulation of the guidelines for website creation and guidance on the availability of website tools

Benefits

- Departments would have a clearer understanding of where to go for guidance
- Would result in more efficient update process and fresher content

Considerations

- An enterprise architecture would need to be created in addition to the preexisting application architecture
- An integrated IT strategy would need to be adopted of that includes: information standards and principles, access to MCG-wide information assets, distribution mechanism and Operational Governance
- Resources from all key departments and agencies will need to be allocated

Progress to Date:

- DTS has identified the need to adopt and provide a more formal IT and Web Governance Model in its strategic planning document
- Improvements include the creation of a *Enterprise Architectural Governance Council* to include a Web Portal governance component



County Web Portal Provider: Public Information Office (PIO)

- **Major Departmental Responsibilities**

- Design, content, usability, information architecture

- **Organizational Procedures**

- *Departmental support:* Provides support for the development of graphics and web design on a case-by-case basis
 - The PIO has 1.5 WYs to maintain information on the County homepage and support the needs of the office, the County Executive, and respond to special requests for assistance.
 - Staff is also responsible for working with DTS to develop special features, and administer policies and standards for the County website.
 - Considers its County web role that of a facilitator
- *Keeping website current:* Considers departments responsible for content, including updating department-specific information
- *Training:* Department is not a training provider

The Public Information Office follows a decentralized web administration governance model.



Source: PIO

County Web Portal Provider: Department of Technology Services (DTS)

▪ Major Departmental Responsibilities

- Internet Portal Technical Owner, along with PIO
- Has full authority over administrative and procedural items
 - May confer with departments and users before making changes
 - Defers to PIO on changes to four front portal pages

▪ Organizational Procedures

- *Departmental support:*
 - Handles questions and requests for help through the DTS Help Desk
 - Handles requests for Web Site or content changes by internal County customers through the Self-Help Information Portal (SHIP)
- *External County customers' questions:* Handled through the main website Contact Page
- *Keeping website current:* DTS identifies and corrects broken links as it can, though its ultimately considered a department's responsibility
- *Training:* Offers some training periodically to users

DTS shares responsibility for the County web portal with the Public Information Office.



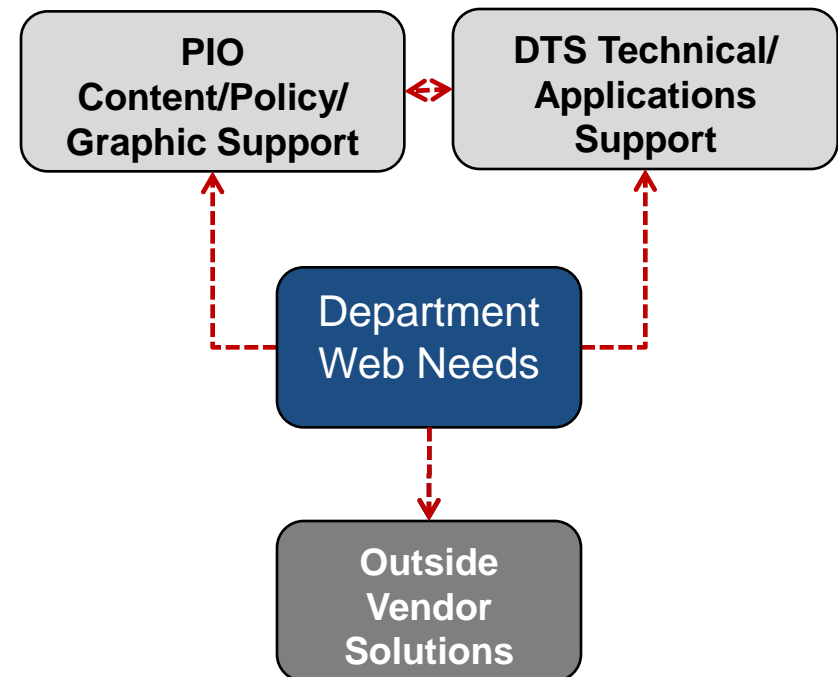
Source: DTS

County Web Portal Strategy

Department of Technology Services

- Internet Portal business owner: Public Information Office
- Internet Portal web applications and content servers support:
 - Data collection (recording or capturing data from constituents, enables constituents to report and incident or event)
 - Information referral
 - On-line payment transactions
 - Subscription, blogs, interactive meetings, messaging, message boards
- PIO maintains and manages web content for the primary Internet Portal pages, including County home page
- Content Management beyond the main County page is done by departments and forwarded to PIO for final review and upload to respective County Internet Portal

Current Web Portal Management Flow Chart



Source: DTS

Addressing the Need For Clear and Specific Web Portal Governance

Next Steps

- **Consider a more formal IT and Web Governance Model, including delineating web portal responsibilities for PIO, DTS and departments and establishing a County webmaster**
- **Establish a process for website creation and guidance on the availability of website tools**
- **Communicate processes to departmental content managers**

Given the benefits, considerations, and progress to date on this department-identified area of improvement, there are a series of next steps that can be considered as the process of improving the web portal moves forward.



Source: DTS

Addressing the Need For Further Development of Opportunities for Training and Information Sharing

Issue: Departments seek the opportunity to engage with other web stakeholders to increase their capacity.

Benefits

- A formal IT knowledge management program would ensure that institutional and technical knowledge exists in a central repository that is accessible to all who require access to it and limits loss of institutional knowledge
- Department users would be more aware of available tools (i.e. Web 2.0 capabilities) and be more able to integrate into individual department web pages
- Departments without staff dedicated to web development would be able to share resources and improve skill set

Considerations

- DTS already maintains a Web Portal Special Interest Group, Web Edit Pro training, and a Web User blog, which are used to varying degrees
- All key County departments and agencies must be willing to allocate resources to make this process effective and successful

Progress to Date:

- There are currently few opportunities to collaborate between departments and share information



Current Efforts to Increase Internal Information Sharing DTS & PIO

- **Web Portal SIG (Special Interest Group) with separation between Administrative and Technical focus**
 - Advantages: Clearly defined issues, benefits and objectives
 - Disadvantages: Must be cognizant of and protect against the possibility of personal agendas overshadowing real business needs
 - *This group is currently inactive due to lack of interest by users
- **Web Edit Pro Training**
 - Advantages: Knowledge transfer and sharing
 - Disadvantages: Users use a myriad of different software to develop websites and some only use Web Edit Pro to upload content
- **Web User Blog**
 - Advantages: Quick and easy way of sharing information and transferring knowledge
 - Disadvantages: Requires PIO or DTS to continually update blog with content that is of interest to users



Source: DTS

Addressing the Need For Further Development of Opportunities for Training and Information Sharing

Next Steps

- Consider how to best publicize current information sharing efforts
- Evaluate informal options to increase cross department training, resource, and information sharing
- Determine the requirements for a formal IT knowledge management program

Given the benefits, considerations, and progress to date on this department-identified area of improvement, there are a series of next steps that can be considered as the process of improving the web portal moves forward.



Source: DTS

Addressing the Availability of Screen Real Estate

Issue: Departments seek access to a larger portion of the County website real estate

Benefits

- Departments and agencies would be able to take advantage of more screen space which would allow more content
- More information pertinent to residents could be provided on the home page
- The web portal would be more competitive with current internet site standards

Considerations

- Requires redesign of all web portal master and content templates, and update to all web portal pages using the current portal standards
- Requires replacement of existing common programming and graphic files used to generate, format, and secure existing web content and applications
- Necessitates client recognition technology to dynamically present web content as defined by the screen resolution and/or the client device (i.e. mobile)
- Project priority would need to be determined based on existing ADT projects
- Resource competition will exist between Portal project and TechMod initiative

Progress to Date:

- A feasibility study was conducted in 2006 that indicated this as a major strategic Web Portal improvement



Addressing the Availability of Screen Real Estate

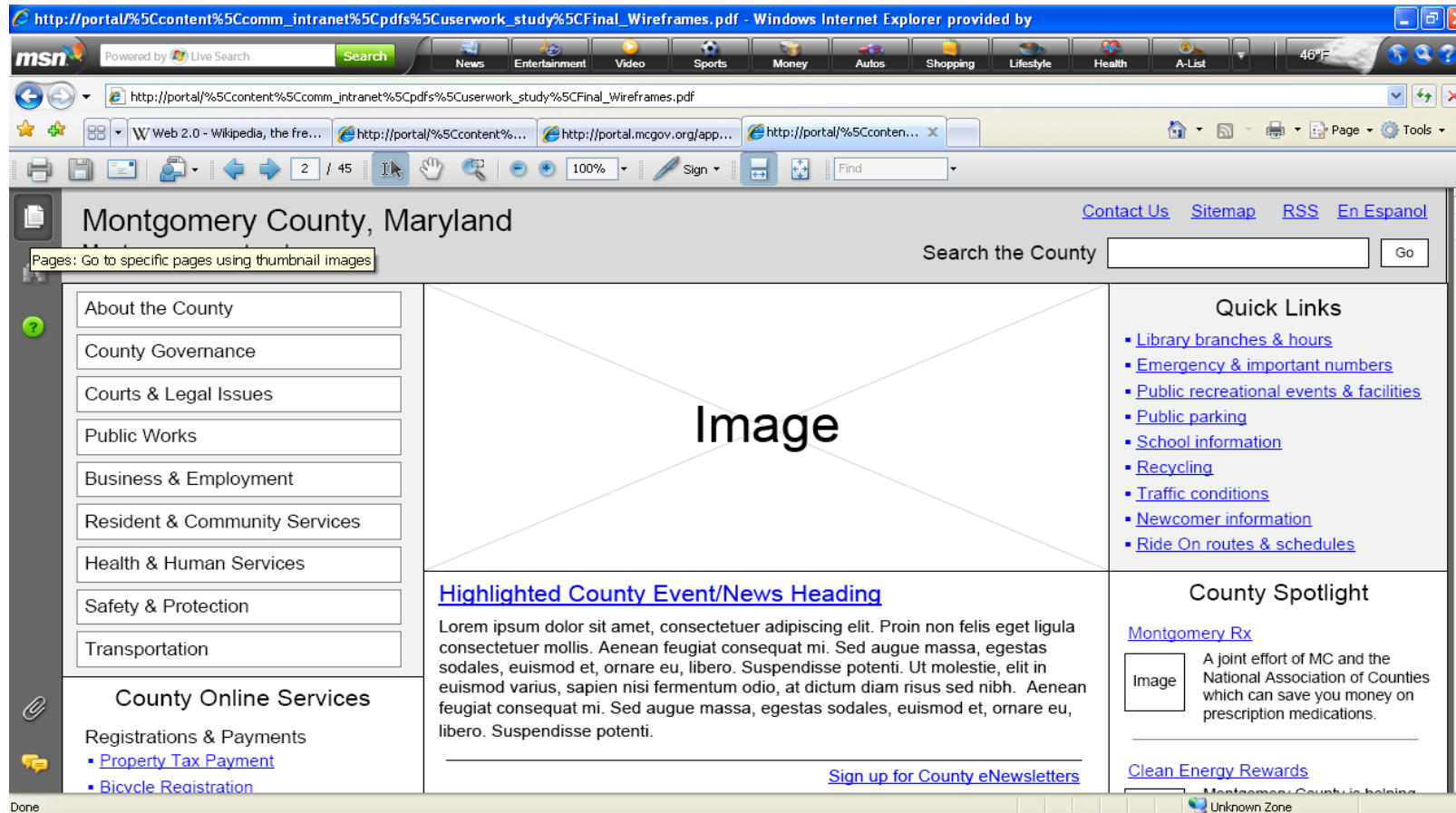
Current Montgomery County Initial Web Page



This is un-utilized screen “real estate.”



Addressing the Availability of Screen Real Estate Usability Analysis: Wireframe Prototype Web Page



This prototype makes use of currently un-utilized space.



Source: Usability Study, 2006

Addressing the Availability of Screen Real Estate Website Layout – San Mateo County, California



This is an example of a County webpage which makes use of expanded screen real estate. Fairfax County has also moved to this format. Both have web portal steering committees that initiate improvements and policies.



Source: San Mateo County, CA; Fairfax Co, VA

Addressing the Availability of Screen Real Estate

Next Steps

- **Consider implementing Usability Study prototype, or similar structure that makes better use of available screen real estate**

Given the benefits, considerations, and progress to date on this department-identified area of improvement, there are a series of next steps that can be considered as the process of improving the web portal moves forward.



Source: DTS

County Web Portal

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CountyStat

Addressing Web Portal Look, Feel, Usability

Issue: Departments understand the need for County branding, yet they want to ensure that most pertinent information is easily located via the County homepage

Benefits

- A common (improved) look and feel could integrate a County “Brand”
- Information would be easier to locate and less navigation would be required by residents
- Web reporting technology (i.e. Google Analytics) can be cost effectively utilized to identify “pertinent” information

Considerations

- Departments have resisted, to some degree, to past efforts to improve consistency (i.e. the domain name and standard template policy)
- May require additional resources to implement improvements

Progress to Date:

- In 2006, DTS contracted to have a usability study for the County web portal. Certain results have been incrementally been made
- Homepage modifications have incrementally been made

There has not been a large-scale revision to look and feel of the County web portal since the County Executive took office.



Addressing Web Portal Look, Feel, Usability

External Website Usability Study, 2006

A study was conducted in 2006 to evaluate the current information architecture on the County web portal and suggest potential improvements that would increase its usability.

- Participants included residents, business owners, and County employees
- Data was gathered on “look and feel” of the site, and participants’ success in performing a series of tasks using the website
- By taking a closer look at the current site’s hierarchy, the study determined that the items used on the main landing pages (i.e. Residents, Government, etc.) represent content that is inconsistently drawn from very different levels within the site (i.e. requiring different numbers of clicks).
- In addition, users were faced with several hundred links on the landing pages making it difficult to find the right path to follow.

While there was praise for the quantity and quality of information, and the overall “look and feel” of the site, certain key recommendations were made around improving the site’s information architecture.



Source: Usability Study, 2006

Addressing Web Portal Look, Feel, Usability

External Website Usability Study, 2006

Recommendations

- To improve the information scent of the County web portal, a top-down approach was recommended which would create a new hierarchy of 1st and 2nd level categories
- A reduced number of clearly labeled categories would better direct users to the correct area of the site to locate the content they need.

Recommended 1st Level Categories

- About the County
- County Government
- Courts & Legal Issues
- Public Works & Transportation
- Business & Employment
- Resident & Community Services
- Health & Human Services
- Public Safety & Protection

The primary goal of the recommended redesign was to improve the “information scent” of the County web portal, and thereby better assist users in finding the content they are looking for.



Source: Usability Study, 2006

Addressing Web Portal Look, Feel, Usability

Next Steps

- **Consider implementing Usability Study recommendations**
 - Should these recommendations should be adopted?
(DTS) The Usability Study recommendations should be formally reviewed, discussed, and approved for adoption by a Web Portal Work Group, which would consist of key County Web Portal stakeholders, and by a Web Portal Steering Committee
 - If so, what it would require to implement such a change?
(DTS) It would require a dedicated web portal team and additional office space, including training/testing facilities, with adequate resources (hardware/software/network resources, etc.) and budget (i.e. professional services funding) to satisfy the recommendations

Given the benefits, considerations, and progress to date on this department-identified area of improvement, there are a series of next steps that can be considered as the process of improving the web portal moves forward.



Source: DTS

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Determining the Need for an External Website

- **Because of the nature of certain departments' work, it might be advantageous for those departments to have separate websites linking to the County's domain**
- **Developing criteria for making that decision in a systematic way would ensure that the best course of action is taken**

The Department of Economic Development, because of the nature of its client base and other reasons, has been granted the ability to develop a website separate from the montgomerycountymd.gov domain.



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Meeting Outcomes

- **Meeting Goal #1: To gain strategic direction on how web portal development should proceed over coming years**
 - How we will measure success:
 - Increase in the number of internal and external “hits” for the County Web Portal
 - Increase in the positive responses in ongoing County Web Portal survey results (Note: County should consider adopting a more formal survey methodology)
 - Increase in web-based transaction solutions with departmental measures on reduced resource interfaces for consumer direct transactions
 - Potential solutions to achieve goal:
 - Creation of clearly defined County Website Portal governance model
 - Implement recommendations from Website Usability Study
 - Institute more frequent department website content audit/review



Meeting Outcomes

- **Meeting Goal #2: To build a streamlined process for departments to gain the necessary support for the development of quality websites that deliver the information and services to county residents**
 - How we will measure success:
 - Increase in customer satisfaction and positive responses during ongoing County Web Portal surveys
 - Decrease in broken links; a quick turnaround on correcting broken links
 - Adopting a threshold for freshness of department information and meeting that goal
 - Increased usage mechanisms / web hits
 - Potential solutions to achieve goal:
 - Quarterly newsletter edited jointly by PIO, DTS and contributing departments
 - Cross departmental sharing of Web Portal technical resources
 - Adopt a formal Knowledge Management program



Wrap-Up

- **Confirmation of follow-up items**
- **Time frame for next meeting**



Appendix: Department of Finance

Use of County Web Portal

- **Total resources devoted to website development:**
 - Two staff doing website development in addition to current job assignments
 - Manages its own web portal content internally
 - Assistance from PIO and DTS regarding web based Application Development
 - Internally revamping Finance website information
- **Major issues impacting your Department's use of the county web portal**
 - Current page space limited to 800X600
 - Current CMS system is cumbersome, older technology, use of WEP forces workaround
 - Inconsistent naming convention, too many old files, current Style Sheet limitations
- **What challenges you encounter maintaining/creating your website**
 - Lack of inter-departmental or team collaboration, lack of process documentation
- **What improvements would you like to see in the way the County manages the web portal**
 - Provide either centralized assistance with web development or budgetary resources for Departments to provide a Web Master with expertise to handle technical and content development and management

The Finance web portal is an essential link to citizens seeking County payment and/or financial services and functions.



Appendix: Libraries

Use of County Web Portal

- **Total resources devoted to website development:**
 - Generates the largest number of website “Hits” among County agencies
 - No dedicated staff or “web master” for website development; utilizes staff with web skills
 - Assistance from some DTS and PIO for some content management and website items
- **Major issues impacting your Department’s use of the county web portal**
 - Lack of clear understanding of County web portal governance
 - Current website layout limited and does not provide sufficient “Branding” opportunity
 - Lack of dedicated position to web oversight, development and management
- **What challenges you encounter maintaining/creating your website**
 - Maintaining presence on main web page, formal guidance, design, training and tools
- **What improvements would you like to see in the way the County manages the web portal**
 - Clearly defined governance, ability to receive and analyze web statistics and metrics; ability to offer web-based multi-language support and services

Public Libraries plays a critical role in providing media-based services to the community at large, and the County’s Web Portal is the essential element of that process.



Appendix: Health and Human Services

Use of County Web Portal

- **Total resources devoted to website development:**
 - No dedicated staff for website development.
 - Assistance from some Department Service Area staff for some content management
 - Assistance on a request basis for Departmental ITS department on availability basis.
- **Major issues impacting your Department's use of the county web portal**
 - Outdated information; site is not user friendly (organization and communication style)
 - Content development and management
 - Lack of dedicated position to web oversight, development and management
- **What challenges you encounter maintaining/creating your website**
 - Lack of financial, technical and skill based resources
- **What improvements would you like to see in the way the County manages the web portal**
 - Provide either centralized assistance with web development or budgetary resources for Departments to provide a Web Master with expertise to handle technical and content development and management

The HHS web site allows residents to access information about HHS services and in the future, the means to complete online applications.



Appendix: DEP – Solid Waste Services

Use of County Web Portal

- **Total resources devoted to website development:**
 - Manages own web portal content internally
 - Developed internal process to keep content as current as possible
- **Major issues impacting your Department's use of the county web portal**
 - Adopted HUD Content Review Process due to limitations of County defined process
 - Need a consistent County managed Web Portal SIG (Special Interest Group)
 - Need ability to retrieve and analyze metrics and determine “Top Tasks”
- **What challenges you encounter maintaining/creating your website**
 - Current County Web toolset is limited and needs updating
- **What improvements would you like to see in the way the County manages the web portal**
 - County has a pretty good “Static” website; need move to the next eve of innovation
 - Need latest trends, best practices and “What's New” (i. e. Blogging, Twitter, etc.)
 - Full integration of **Web 2.0** concepts and practices
 - More focus on Web Access for People with Disabilities
 - More focus on enhanced “Usability” and “Look and Feel”



Appendix: MC311

Use of the County Web Portal

Issues:

- MC311 needs “good, accurate data” from www.montgomerycountymd.gov
- Critical paths exists around the following:
 - Governance framework: Roles and responsibilities
 - Enforcement mechanisms: Policy and standard operating procedures (SOPs)
 - Tool set and skillset required to manage content: Web Edit Pro

Near Term Solution:

- Scrubbing and cleaning of current Departmental and Offices websites
- Creation of content for Departments and Offices without adequate content

Long Term Solution:

- Restructure governance framework
- Establish enforcement mechanisms & “enforce”
- Assess current solution and required skill sets
- Establish a tiered support model



Appendix:

Overview of Major Revisions to County Web Portal

1995: Launched initial website consisting of 42 web pages

- Overall site management comprised of a DTS/PIO team of about 4 staff
- County management decided on a decentralized approach to departmental web page development along with DTS/PIO guidance

1997: Redesigned co.mo.md.us and improved the navigation

- Overall site management and decentralized approach remained

2000: Launched second website, emontgomery.org

- Site managed by DTS

2002: Launched montgomerycountymd.gov that was combined from co.mo.md.us and emontgomery.org

- Adopted current page structure and four portal approach

2002 - Present: Developed enhancements to existing template

- Google search and translation, myMontgomery, Montgomery in demand, “I want to”, etc.

